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July 21, 1995

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

PARTNERSHIPS FOR EXCELLENCE

CHARLESTON -- In its eighth year, Eastern Illinois University's Partnerships for Excellence (PFE) program continues to attract talented minority students to campus for their first encounter with the college experience.

Assisted by a HECA grant (Higher Education Cooperation Act) Eastern and Percy Julian High School in Chicago began with a five-week pilot program for seniors in 1989. The following year, a two-week program for freshmen was added and Lake Land College began its involvement with the program. By 1991, PFE was expanded to include high schools from across the state.

The program, which provides minority high school students with college potential an opportunity to earn college credit in math, English and aerobics or racquetball, has been recognized by the Illinois Board of Higher Education as an "Outstanding Minority Achievement Program."

Forty-nine seniors and 64 freshmen from 11 schools are participating in the PFE program for 1995.

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Harvey Reynolds, a senior at Champaign Central High School, heard about the program from his school counselor. Reynolds was interested in the program because he felt it would give him the opportunity to observe college life before "doing it for real."

"The program has given me something solid to look at and experience. The professors have been very kind and really want us to succeed. They are always willing to answer questions, provide tutoring, or whatever we need," said Reynolds.

Reynolds, who plans to major in engineering or computer science, also found the campus atmosphere to be "uplifting" and he enjoyed the opportunity to "intermingle with college students and the students who were on campus for other conferences and workshops."

John Craft, associate professor of physical education at Eastern and PFE director, has worked with the program since the beginning. His job includes recruiting students and meeting with parents at the various high schools.

Craft said, "It's hard for parents to send their children, especially high school freshmen, to a college campus 175 miles away. But many of them have heard of the program and want their children to have the experience. We are now getting students in the senior program, who participated in the freshmen program. We've got 14 students here this year who were here as freshmen."

To help students and parents cope with the separation, Craft has added a Parent's Day. Parents were allowed to visit students

on Sunday, July 9.

Stephanie Spaulding, a senior at Morgan Park High School in Chicago, participated in PFE as a freshman. She was able to skip her junior year of high school, but did not want to miss the opportunity to participate in PFE as a senior.

"I liked the experience I had as a freshman. It really wasn't like a camp. It was more like the real world. I had a schedule to follow, and I had to be responsible. It gave me a feel for what college life is like," observed Spaulding, who hopes to major in education and go on to law school.

In addition to providing academic opportunities, PFE also offers students a variety of activities designed to expand their horizons, improve social skills, self-esteem and independence. Students also attend seminars on study skills, time management, college admissions and financial aid.

Craft said that 92 percent of last year's seniors enrolled in some form of higher education.

Participating schools in the PFE freshman and senior programs are Percy Julian, Lindblom Technical and Morgan Park high schools in Chicago; Eisenhower, Douglas MacArthur and Stephen Decatur high schools in Decatur; East St. Louis High School; Danville High School; Centennial and Central high schools in Champaign; and Urbana High School.